

**Meeting Notes
Community Review Group
10-16-03**

ATTENDEES

Community Review Group: Kathie Joyner, Phil Simpson, Ken Hotard, Bill Mitzelfeld, Terry Rodrigue, Don Mock, Sara Michl, Jerry Lee, Peter Gowen

Others: City of Boulder – Bob Harberg, Alan Taylor; Decision-making Systems – Molly Tayer; URS - Scott Randall, Carol Anderson, Steve Rogers

OPENING

Molly Tayer presented the agenda and asked CRG members and City of Boulder and URS staff to introduce themselves.

TECH MEMO #4 Flood Mitigation, Warning, and Education

Flood Mitigation

Bob Harberg kicked off the discussion of *Technical Memorandum #4* with a brief PowerPoint presentation. Following, there was a lively discussion about the meaning of “control” versus “accommodate.” It was explained that controls are physical structures such as levies; accommodate means that measures are taken to lessen adverse impacts but with the realization that things will get wet.

Q: Does a culvert control or accommodate?

A: It does both. A control confines all the water while accommodation allows it to spread out (COB).

Q: Would accommodate include some kind of channelization to minimize “sheet” flooding?

Comment: It looks as though accommodate and control overlap; part of the problem is that we think of them as antithetical.

Q: If we do a modest amount of channelization, is that considered structural? In Goose Creek, it is structural.

Comment: We are not working with precise issues here.

Comment: A modest amount of natural channelization would provide a tremendous amount of help to some people.

Key Issue #1 Balance constructed flood mitigation and property

Comment: Be careful about all the terms that you're throwing out when you take this to the public.

Comment: Goose Creek criticism – criticism happens. All parties need to look at all the information and understand the whole context and history.

Comment: Flood mitigation: balance control and construct needs. Removal equals accommodation? It is not always that simple.

Comment: Flood mitigation is a control; property acquisition is an accommodation (COB).

Comment: Fairness: need to look at what all of the people in the community have paid for and assure we do not "turn off" the "control/construct" options before we have dealt with commitments to people in all floodways; don't leave some neighbors "underserved."

Comment: It is an issue of equity.

Comment: 2,300 people live in the floodplain that didn't expect to be there. Some had looked at FEMA maps to avoid the floodplain. As a fairness and equity issue, wouldn't be happy if City adopted policy of "no more mitigation projects because the City wants to go 'soft.'"

Comment: Need a good balance - look at what available \$\$ can buy and remove what you can. Do not want to see a policy that says "no more built projects."

Comment: Could have policy to allow people to flood-proof and take care of their own property mitigation; if this is feasible, City should share cost.

Key Issue #2 Floodplain risk assessments should be developed

Q: Who does these?

A: They are included in floodplain mapping updates done by subcontractors for the City.

Q: Would these risk assessments go beyond the 100-year event?

A: They would look at different flood events – 25, 50, 100, 500-year events (COB).

Q: Would they look at more frequent events?

A: Yes, and they would look at not only property damages, but life safety (COB).

Comment: It is important to take a look at all these. For example, the Foothills Housing Project considered the 500-year floodplain and moved the buildings on the site to get them out of the 500-year floodplain. It is smart to look at the floodplain risk level because if there is a way to rearrange the buildings on the land to remove risk, why not do it? Build smarter.

Key Issue #3 Continue to use prioritization list of structures (Love and Associates, 1997)

Comment: Should use the best available information available anytime we have it.

Comment: You have a prioritized list - don't be too aggressive with it. Do not condemn properties unless property owner wants to sell.

Comment: Need more information. What assumptions and information were used to create the "prioritized list?" How was list built? Is it really the "best available information?"

Key Issue #4 Investigate more specifically how money reserved in post-flood property acquisition fund could be leveraged with state or federal disaster relief fund, etc.

Q: Is this used after a flood to purchase properties that are in areas where they will not be allowed to rebuild?

Q: Is the criteria for where this is disallowed called out in the FEMA Disaster Act? What criteria are used to prevent people from reconstructing?

Q: If there is a "life-safety" interest – yes, I agree people should not rebuild. But if it is an insured property not in the high hazard zone (HHZ), doesn't that mean we should let it compete for other funds with other projects to be replaced?

Comment: Ft. Collins flood was caused by blockage. Tree limbs blocked the channel and the flood rerouted itself around it. Need to look at all of the creeks and floodways to see where we have the potential for this kind of blockage.

Q: Have you considered tree removal in flood zones? Could we inventory areas where trees become a hazard? Need to look at all potential for blockage/debris interference.

A: May need to review the Boulder Creek non-containment policy. There is a policy statement that says we should not intervene in trying to contain Boulder Creek (COB).

Comment: That is politically difficult.

Comment: The same attention/consideration should be provided the built environment that we provide for accommodating our natural environment.

Comment: There is a need to balance these two.

Comment: I suggest that non-containment should be rethought, refined, and not be considered an absolute.

Flood Warning and Education

Alan Taylor gave a PowerPoint presentation on "Flood Preparedness and Flood Education and Insurance."

Key Issue # 5 Preparedness

Q: How does anyone hearing a siren in Boulder know if it is flood, or something else?

A: Sirens mean "get more information (COB)."

Q: Have we explored ways of using various siren tones to denote different warnings or getting the specific information on a web site?

A: UDFCD has flood emergency information on their site. Can link to this (COB).

Q: Using the example of the signs around town that show "Fire Evacuation Routes," where are the flood escape routes? How do people learn and see this? Sign in Boulder High, "Climb to Safety." It is pretty flat there! Climb where?

A: There is a flood response plan. The signs in the canyon that state "Climb to Safety" helps people do the right things (COB).

Comment: We need to have the following question answered, when it's happening in my drainage, where do I go?

Q: How long does someone have when they hear the siren?

A: 20 to 45 minutes – more like 20 (COB).

Comment: People in this situation are going to be very excited. They need to know where to go quickly for instruction.

A: There is a page in the phone book telling them (COB).

Comment: It should be the first page in the phone book because that is where people go for 911, etc.

Q Seems like so much is known about natural hazards. Where are we in our planning for what to do in the event of terrorism? What if someone takes out Barker? Is there a plan for this?

A: Boulder County is starting to work with the Dept. of Homeland Security regarding terrorism. Need to make hazard plan available to the public. There is a concern that advertising what to do for a Barker flood scares people. Not sure I would put this info out. How could it be used (COB)?

Comment: Put information out where people can get it, utilizing low tech to high tech applications. Place postings in non-residential structures. Instead of flyers, put out information for people to post in their house (e.g., on a closet door), refrigerator magnets, radios with batteries.

Q: What ever happened to the "tone-activated radios" that the City used to require citizens to have?

A: Technology has evolved for the tone-activated radios, which now cost \$300. There is no inspection program. Sirens are more effective for people outside. Still operating in hotels (COB).

Q: What message is sent on the reverse 911 service?

Q: Regarding additional rain gauges on the plains, what would happen with a rain gauge on Gregory Creek? Would it make a difference?

A: Need to look at this creek-by-creek. Gregory would have time (COB).

Comment: I want to add my strong support for floodproofing. Need to promote this. Can't imagine a bigger bang for your buck. We should be designing comparative use of construct dollars for some creeks - what could we do if we floodproofed instead?

Comment: The City is doing a cost/benefit analysis comparing cost of individual floodproofing v. building structures (COB).

Key Issue #6 Education

Q: How do you handle the perception of the public on whether or not they are in a floodplain or out of it? People think they either need to do floodproofing or they do not.

A: Need to educate the public about the faceless flood; we are all in the floodplain (COB).

Q: Who gets the mailing each spring from the UDFCD?

A: The UDFCD mailer is targeted to those in the 100-year floodplain. Our Utilities flyer goes to everyone (COB).

Q: Regarding the creation of a flood management office, I am under the impression that we have that function. Do we need an office to get a higher visibility?

A: South Boulder Creek team identified this office as a need (COB).

Q: This could be a person, not a physical office, right?

A: Yes, we have an identified point of contact – Alan (COB).

Comment: I would look for low-hanging fruit first. Start with an enhanced web page with links to UDFCD. All these things on your list are worth doing, but good luck with the funding. There is an opportunity to generate funds through the stormwater utility fee. There was no feedback when fees were raised during the 5 years I was on the WRAB. If the benefits are clear, then it is publicly supportable.

Key Issue #7 Insurance

Q: From my personal experience living on Two Mile Creek, sometimes I have needed flood insurance and sometimes I haven't. How do people get their arms around this?

A: Boulder is digitizing maps. However, the City has no standing with respect to whether or not mortgage banks require insurance (COB).

Comment: If you want to increase the number of policies, offset costs for people in the floodplains some way – a break in property taxes or some fee?

Comment: If the cost of flood insurance was more modest, I'd buy it although technically I am not in the floodplain.

Comment: Look at flip side of this – if City starts paying for all of this, it means that we as citizens are paying for people in areas of risk to buy insurance. Concern for all citizens supporting people to live in a floodplain.

Comment: Flood protection as a community investment I can buy; buying flood insurance doesn't get us there. Insurance companies always raise rates. We can't control this market, so why get into it?

Comment: We are between a rock and a hard place. We want to get community investment, yet want fees/taxes to stay affordable. We need to look first at what we are willing to pay to get some of these essential protections covered.

Comment (COB): Perceived risk is low. Don't see any differences in appraised values of houses in and out of floodplain, thus it is not perceived as a real risk.

Q: Why aren't there special improvement districts for neighborhoods in the floodway?

Comment: On the CRS Rating, the report says that moving our rating one class can save citizens \$30K in lower insurance rates. Is it worth it to save \$30K?

Comment: The consultant ought to be able to tell us that.

Comment (COB): We can get those dollars.

Comment: Need to keep CRS limitations clear. What will you actually buy to get lower CRS ranking? What will it cost us to get there? What does it get us?

Comment: If we move the CRS ranking one class, we save some costs on insurance. Is it worth it? Why? I need to see a balance sheet.

SUMMARY OF TECHNICAL MEMORANDA – MOST CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Regulations

- 500-year floodplains
- Risk assessment

- If you are going to establish a good neighbor policy, ensure that it does not establish a standard of “no new impacts.”
- Q: How far does the City intend to push regulatory changes? Is the City trying to get UCFCD to accept/adopt our standards for protection? A: The City is trying to maintain consistency with UDFCD, but City has tougher regulations (COB)

Insurance

- How are we going to encourage people to get flood insurance.

Cost

- Cost – need costs to City and costs to community attached to each recommendation in the Technical Memoranda.
 - Example: If regulate activities in 500-year floodplain, what will that cost City/community overall.
- Who pays is a huge question. Because Boulder has not had a devastating flood, the community is apathetic. People won't pay if they do not see the risk.
- Would like to see recommendations classified as a “public benefit,” “private benefit,” and “merit.
- Privatizing/outsourcing flood proofing for cost benefits.

Water Quality

- Perceived shift in burden from public to private sector, particularly in Water Quality area – need to politically bridge that. Need to get other people in agreement to do this.
- Water quality is a hot button issue with business owners. Water quality is totally undefined and no understanding of what BMPs are (i.e., what this means, what this gets you, cost/benefit). Believes that Boulder exceeds federal mandates. Instead of protecting interests of business/homeowners, Boulder always protects the environment.
- There is no described and agreed to community value regarding clean water. Need to get a standard for community value and “how clean is clean,” and need to talk to broader community to get there.

Process

- An example of a good process was writing the community wetlands ordinance. It was based on a great deal of research.

Stormwater

- Detention – inspection and maintenance
- Assure that you have drainage pathways

Education

- Educate public about good neighbor practices and give specific examples to help people see what this means

IDEAS FOR NEXT STEPS

COB staff

Staff will update the WRAB on the activities of the CRG and IRP. This is planned for November. Staff doesn't envision taking it to Council for a formal public hearing until the beginning of next year. Would like input on what the CRG members see as next steps.

CRG members

Comment: Need to take this to an open house/workshop process so that the public can ask individual questions. The information is too complicated and very complex, and there is a large amount of information that people need to understand.

Comment: Betting that the general public will want to know what drainage basin they live in, how it will affect them, and how much it will cost. Consider doing a basin-by-basin open house, otherwise, very few will attend. Give characteristics of different kinds of storm events. Need to smooth out edges before getting into policy or taking action.

CLOSING

Molly and Bob thanked the CRG members for their participation and asked them how they would like to be engaged in this process in the future. All wanted to review the information before it goes to the board.

